

Canadian Radio-television and
Telecommunications CommissionConseil de la radiodiffusion et
des télécommunications canadiennes

Canada

**News Release**

April 4, 1995

CRTC BACKS BALANCE & ETHICS PRINCIPLES WITH RELIGIOUS DECISIONS

OTTAWA/HULL – The CRTC has reaffirmed the principles of balance and ethics contained in its religious broadcasting policy with the approval today of Victory Christian Fellowship of Lethbridge (1983) Inc.'s application for a new over-the-air English-language television station in Alberta devoted to religious programming (Decision CRTC 95-129). The Commission today also denied a similar application by Cherry Point Community Promotion Association of Dawson Creek, B.C. (Decision CRTC 95-130). These decisions follow a June 1994 public hearing in Saskatoon and a subsequent clarification of the applicants' commitments regarding balance and ethics at the Commission's request.

"The CRTC introduced a more flexible policy on religious broadcasting two years ago to allow the freest possible communication of religious values and ideas, while protecting audiences against potential intolerance and commercial exploitation," said CRTC Chairman Keith Spicer. "We consider it important that over-the-air television services owned by single-faith groups provide balanced programming, as required by the *Broadcasting Act*, by offering viewers a spectrum of views on issues of public concern...including religion. As added protection, religious broadcasters are expected to adhere to the CRTC's guidelines for a rigorous code of ethics dealing with such matters as fundraising. And as for all other Canadian broadcasters, the programming must satisfy the appropriate Canadian content requirements."

"Victory and Cherry Point were the first single-faith organizations to apply for a television broadcasting licence under our new policy," Mr. Spicer explained. "We carefully examined, in particular, their proposed methods for providing balanced programming as well as their proposed measures for enforcing our guidelines on ethics with respect to all programming."

"We've concluded that Victory's proposal satisfies the requirement for balance contained in the *Broadcasting Act*, as interpreted in the religious broadcasting policy. Cherry Point's application, on the other hand, failed to include adequate measures to ensure the provision of balanced programming and the implementation of the guidelines on ethics. Moreover, the Commission considered that Cherry Point's commitment to Canadian content was not sufficient," Mr. Spicer said.

Victory's commitments

The new television service will operate on channel 17, with a licence expiring on August 31, 2001. All programming will be religious in nature and will consist of talk and information programs, church services, drama, music and programs for children and youth. The schedule also includes programs directed towards aboriginal people and specific ethnic groups.

Victory has committed to broadcast at least 70% Canadian content from 6:00 a.m. to midnight, and 80% between 6:00 p.m. and midnight. By condition of licence, the station's programming will contain no advertising.

To guarantee a balanced programming, Victory is required, by condition of

licence, to broadcast at least 14 hours per week of programming that will expose the audience to different points of view on religion, including four hours weekly of such programming between 6 p.m. and midnight. Specifically, Victory's commitments include: seven hours of programming each week consisting of documentaries about various religions, interviews with invited guests from other faith groups and phone-in programs; seven hours of programming from various faith groups in the Lethbridge area; and assistance to other faith groups without sufficient resources to produce programming.

The Commission also expects Victory to fulfill its commitment to adhere to the CRTC guidelines on ethics. These include restrictions on the solicitation of funds and the expectation that programming will demonstrate tolerance, integrity and social responsibility. Victory has proposed specific measures to ensure that all programs meet the guidelines.

Denial of Cherry Point's application

In the Commission's view, Cherry Point's proposal failed to satisfy conditions deemed essential to the provision of balanced religious programming. The application did not include detailed plans as to how Cherry Point would monitor compliance with the guidelines on ethics, and what corrective action it would take should programming violate them. The applicant also proposed to broadcast a lower level of Canadian content than that required by the Television Broadcasting Regulations.

"The Commission, however, would give further consideration to an application from Cherry Point containing firm commitments supported by detailed plans to provide a programming service that meets all requirements of the regulations and the balance requirement set out in the *Broadcasting Act*," Mr. Spicer said

- 30 -

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